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Local, county, state and federal officials renewed support Monday for a proposed forest preserve expansion in Buffalo Grove that could aid flood control efforts on the Des Plaines River.

The project would add 250 acres of prairie and wetlands to Buffalo Creek Forest Preserve, which is in Lake County on the north side of Lake-Cook Road at Arlington Heights Road.

But U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, state Rep. Elaine Nekritz, area mayors and other proponents are passionate about the proposal because a new, 30-acre reservoir included in the plan would allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build a new levee on the Des Plaines River.

The new levee -- dubbed Levee 37 -- would be built on the river between Palatine Road and Euclid Avenue.

It could take two years to build and cost \$15 million to \$20 million, representatives from the Army Corps said.

A similar levee nearing completion in Des Plaines helped control river flooding last summer, officials said. The people gathered Monday morning in Kirk's Northbrook office said they hope the levee they seek would protect homes and businesses in Mount Prospect and Prospect Heights.

"We know that these projects work," said Nekritz, a Northbrook Democrat. "We know they can be successful."

The proposal is backed by the Lake County Forest Preserve District, which owns the Buffalo

Creek land, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and many local leaders and lawmakers. However, it can't move forward without approval from the National Park Service because that agency helped fund improvements at the preserve in the 1990s and can control changes there.

And the Illinois Department of Natural Resources won't issue a permit for the proposed levee unless an upstream water-storage system is in place, Nekritz said.

The park service has blocked the expansion, saying the Buffalo Creek land can't be converted to other purposes, but Kirk called its objections a technicality.

Kirk, forest district board President Bonnie Thomson Carter and other officials say the proposed Buffalo Creek expansion doesn't constitute a change at all -- it's a move that would allow them to protect more land in the area.

"Change is not bad, as long as it adds to environmental protection," said Kirk, a Highland Park Republican.

The request is on the desk of U.S. Interior Department Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, Kirk said, and the congressman said he believes Kempthorne is amenable to the plan. Kirk said he hopes to hear from Kempthorne within a month.

As for the work planned for the Buffalo Creek preserve, the \$30 million proposal includes far more than construction of a new reservoir. New and redesigned trails, foot bridges, a second fishing area, two family picnic shelters and an expanded parking area are among the proposed improvements in a master plan the forest board approved last year.

Several of Monday's speakers commented on how the project crosses party lines and municipal borders.

"Water knows no boundaries," said Carter, an Ingleside Republican.